

Forest History Foundation, Inc.
St. Paul, Minnesota

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Adam Macpherson
Eureka, California
1953

by John Larson

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By John Larson, Forest History Foundation, Inc.

(When did you go to work for the Yosemite Lumber Company?)

March 15, 1918.

(From the pictures you have given me it seems that one of the most interesting things about the company were the railroads.)

That was the incline railroad from the Yosemite Valley railroad; it went up the side of a hill a mile and a half and rose 3,000 feet in that mile and a half. The steepest part was about 66% grade. Then it went into the woods about 15 miles back of that. We had three locomotives up there and had 100 logging cars. You can see from the pictures they had bulkheads on the cars to keep the logs from slipping off.

(What kind of work did you do there?)

I was a pencil pusher. Here is a picture of the inside of the mill at Merced Falls.

(What kind of mill was it?)

It was a two band mill. They ran two ten-hour shifts. That was a long time ago. Here is a picture of that tressle.

(Can you tell me something about that?)

There was a dam about seven miles up from the mill, on the Merced River, that backed the water up about twenty-three miles.

(What was the purpose of the dam?)

It was an irrigation dam. It had nothing to do with our lumbering, except that they had to build a tressle over it for the Yosemite Valley railroad which brought our logs from the woods and the mill at Merced Falls. This is a picture of the office crew. I am the first man on the left in the back row. That was about 1924 or '25.

(This town that I see - tell me about it.)

It was called Merced Falls, the company's sawmill town. This is the store. We had a very complete town. There were about 60 houses there for

the employees and their families. Those with 2 bunk houses and a hotel took care of about 253 men. The Yosemite Valley railroad ran right through the town. Here are some pictures of the railroad again. This is the top of the second new incline into the woods which was built about 1924. This was not as steep as the other one. You can identify the first incline because it was straight. The second incline was electric and had two turns in it.

(What year was the first incline built?)

Must have been built along about '06 or '07. The second followed in 1924 and '25.

This is inside the power house. This was inside the shop. They did all their own work there. It was a complete shop and was located back in the woods. This picture will give you an idea of the country. Here is the power house back in here. This is the top of the incline. This was the woods superintendent's house.

(What was his name?)

Al Tinker. This looks toward the top of the incline. You can see the houses dotted over the hillside. This shows some of the big trees.

(Do you have a picture showing both inclines?)

No; that wouldn't be possible. They were five miles apart. They were completely separate. This is a picture of the sawmill at Merced Falls cutting up the logs. That is the hotel and school house. Inside of cook house. Bunk house. Hospital - all in Merced Falls and about fifty miles from the woods. We had a resident doctor and a hospital. That is the mill again. That is Camp 16 in the woods.

(How many camps did they have in the woods?)

They had two. There is a steam shovel. Wood burning donkeys. There is a crew going out into the woods. There is the passenger train on the Yosemite Valley railroad. Here is old Martin Black. He was in charge of the shovels. He is standing there in front of the tree. He got into a tangle there at one time. There was a dynamite charge that didn't go off and when he investigated it, it went off in his face and blinded him, knocked one eye and took his hand off. You can see what a rough country it was from that picture. These are pictures of the inside of the Hoist House. This is a picture of the mill at Merced Falls. Here is where they dumped all their garbage - very sanitary in those days!! This is inside the dry kilns. We had a lot of negroes down there. On the south side of the Merced River they had one incline. The second incline was on the north side and from the top they went back about two miles and then there was another incline which was just a short stretch and then back into the woods

about 10 or 12 miles. It was quite a costly business to drop those logs down. Now these pictures are yours and you can do with them whatever you want. They belonged to Harry Lowell who was manager of the company and when he died, his mother gave them to me and I have had them for some eighteen years. They are of no use to me so you might as well keep them.